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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR S/IRAQ ENVOY - AMB. JONES, NEA/I-R.OLSON, AND  
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SUBJECT: EUROPEAN COMMISSION THINKING ON INTERNATIONAL IRAQ  
CONFERENCE

11. (SBU) Summary. The European Commission wants to see a successful U.S.-EU co-hosted Iraq conference in June, and is convinced this means keeping it to a one-day event, and focusing the agenda on next steps in Iraq between now and the next round of elections. The EC is in synch with U.S. thinking on the conference, but has some concerns such as how to schedule 50-70 ministers' speaking time and whether a face-face preparatory meeting is necessary. The EC also wants to see UN participation in the planning, hopes the Iraqi delegation will include civil society and Sunnis, sees Turkey as key to bringing Iraq's neighbors to the event, and is cool to the Japanese offer to be a third co-host. EC Middle East Director Leffler hopes to speak to EB A/S Wayne soon, and looks forward to Ambassador Jones' April 21 visit. End Summary.

12. (SBU) The European Commission has started to focus on the U.S.-EU co-hosted international conference on Iraq. Key officials on the staff of EC Middle East Director Christian Leffler, who has the lead on the conference, met with Poloff and Development Counselor on April 13. Keying off the points shared by EUR Acting A/S Bradtke with the EU at the April 11 U.S.-EU Political and Security Committee Troika meeting (septel), the officials said the EC is in agreement with the U.S. on "95 percent" of the issues. EC thinking on key issues is outlined below.

Venue: Brussels or Luxembourg okay; but 70 ministers?

13. (SBU) EC is agnostic on whether Brussels or Luxembourg would work best, noting that the EC has never organized a 70-delegation ministerial-level conference. Of concern, regardless of venue, is how to organize a one-day ministerial conference with up to seventy delegations. If even 50 ministers are present, all will want three minutes to speak. In the EC's view, that is a formula for wasting a day with nothing to show at the end.

Structure: Keep it one-day and simple

14. (SBU) EC is concerned that, with only six weeks to plan, the conference should be focused on sending the right political message of support to the new Iraqi government. It should be a one-day event; there isn't time to organize follow-on civil society or private sector gatherings. Rather, ministers could give mandates to other groups to follow up in these areas. The EC also does not want to overburden the Iraqis with an overly ambitious agenda.

Themes: Reconciliation, Int'l Support, Iraqi vision

15. (SBU) EC sees three objectives for the conference: (1) promote "reconciliation" (i.e. Sunni participation); (2) demonstrate international support for the transitional government; (3) allow the new Iraqi government to articulate its goals and priorities between now and the next elections. This should not be seen as a donor pledging conference. Further funding is not being raised at this event and the emphasis is now on disbursement of existing pledged funds. The EC sees value-added for the conference by having it focus on the specific period between now and the next elections. They see the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs taking the lead, with Ministry of Planning in a support role.

Prominent UN Role

16. (SBU) The EC wants to see a prominent UN role in the conference, to help UN Rep Qazi in his role. For example, the EC thinks the UN should be part of the small coordinating group that plans the conference.

Cairo Preparatory Meeting: Too much?

17. (SBU) The EC asked for more details on this idea. Their concern is that a truly substantive preparatory meeting will divert resources from planning the conference itself. If the preparatory meeting is not substantive, there's no reason to hold it. EC would prefer to handle coordination through

conference calls, much as donor coordination is handled, so decisions can be made quickly and on a regular basis, as planning progresses.

Turkey

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18. (SBU) The EC sees Turkey as playing a key role to bring Iraq's neighbors to the conference.

Iraqi delegation: Include Civil Society

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19. (SBU) The EC believes it is essential that the Iraqi delegation include civil society, women, and Sunnis. This will help address issues the international community can be expected to raise re reconciliation, human rights, and civil society.

EU cool to Japan as co-host

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10. (SBU) The EU Presidency (Luxembourg) has informed Japan that it would welcome a special Japanese role in the conference, perhaps chairing a specific session, but is cool to the idea of co-sponsorship by Japan. Our interlocutors like the notion of a U.S.-EU event and want to keep sponsorship limited. Otherwise, why not include Canada or others, too?

Next Steps: EC Needs Iraqi Request for the Conference

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11. (SBU) EC Middle East Director Leffler, who is traveling April 13 to Jerusalem, will try to contact EB A/S Wayne on April 13th or 14th to discuss these issues in more detail. The EC also looks forward to Ambassador Jones' April 21 meetings in Brussels to help flesh out the way forward. The EC sees the Amman donors conference as coming after the US-EU conference, being broader in scope, but held at the technical, vice political, level. Finally, the EC reiterated it needs an official Iraqi government request for the conference.

12. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

MCKINLEY

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